

HABS  
VA,  
65-NORF,  
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Norfolk City Hall and Courthouse  
(General Douglas MacArthur Memorial)  
421 East City Hall Avenue  
Norfolk (Independent City)  
Virginia

HABS No. VA-32

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## AMERICA'S CITY HALLS PROJECT

Name: Norfolk City Hall and Courthouse  
General Douglas MacArthur Memorial

Location: 421 East City Hall Avenue  
Norfolk, Virginia

Present Owner: City of Norfolk

Present Occupant: General Douglas MacArthur Memorial Foundation

Present Use: Memorial and tomb of General Douglas MacArthur

Significance: Norfolk became an independent city by Act of Assembly in 1845. Almost immediately thereafter, the City Council and citizens began planning the construction of a new City Hall building and courthouse which would house new municipal offices and, simultaneously, symbolize Norfolk's new status and prosperity. This building served as the city hall from 1850 until 1918 and as a courthouse only until 1960. In 1961, the interior was substantially remodelled to provide a memorial and tomb for General Douglas A. MacArthur.

The structure was originally designed by William R. Singleton, a Portsmouth native and St. Louis architect, with assistance from Thomas U. Walter. It has been described as one of Virginia's best remaining Classical Revival buildings.

## PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## PHYSICAL HISTORY (PART A)

1. Date of Erection: 1847 - 1850

On February 13, 1845 a City charter was granted to Norfolk. On September 1, 1845, the Select Council passed a resolution that "a Committee of three members be appointed to confer with a similar Committee on the part of the Common Council to inquire into the expediency of erecting a new City Hall - to ascertain if a suitable site for the same can be had and the probable cost of such a building" (Records of Common Council, Volume 6, p. 147). A local controversy over the selection of a site arose soon after, with some citizens in favor of building on the site of the old city hall, while others preferred building on the newly developed "Public Square". On January 12, 1846 Council passed a resolution requesting the Mayor "to open a poll on the 4th Thursday in April to ascertain the will of the qualified voters in relation to the building of a new City Hall and jail and also as to the most suitable and proper site whereon to erect such building" (Records of Common Council, Volume 6, p. 180).

However, at a meeting of the Select Council held on Thursday, February 12, 1846 it was resolved,

"1st. That the Common Council believe it to be the wish of the qualified voters of the City of Norfolk, that immediate steps be taken for the erection of a new City Hall, combining all the essentials of convenience and durability, and in all other respects worthy of the rapid improvement of the City.

"2nd. That taking into consideration among other things, the expense of a new lot, its foundation & c., and the consequent expense of a new Jail, in case of a change in location, it is proper the new City Hall should be erected on the site of the old one.

"(Doctor Wilson moved to strike out the words 'old site' and to substitute the words 'Public Square', which motion was advocated by C. Hall Esq., on the ground 1st, that it would be more economical & c. The amendment was lost without a count.)

"3rd. That a committee consisting of Messrs. Hatton, Dickson, Milhado and Williams, be appointed to act with a committee from the Select Council, to invite by advertisement for one month, in the papers of the City, plans for said building; offering a premium of \$100 for the one that may be adopted; - and after they shall have made their election and submitted it to the Councils for approval, advertise in the same papers for one month for sealed proposals to build, giving as near as possible the plan adopted..." (The American Beacon, February 16, 1846.)

An editorial of the day approved the resolution, stating that:

"We learn that the Select Council yesterday passed unanimously the Resolutions of the Common Council of the 5th instant, on the subject of building a new City Hall, and selecting the old as the most appropriate site, for the new building. Immediate measures will be instituted, we trust, towards the erection of the building, one in all respects, we hope, suited to the present and prospective prosperity and growth of our flourishing City." (The American Beacon, February 13, 1846.)

The Committee charged with securing the new plans, placed the following advertisement,

"Notice,

The Committee appointed by the Select and Common Councils, to advertise for plans for a City Hall - offer a premium of one hundred dollars for the plans submitted to them which may meet the approval of the two Councils - and they thereby invite plans to be submitted to them for a City Hall, to be erected on the lot on Main Street, on which the old building stands - the front of which is 94 feet by a depth of 114 feet." (The American Beacon, March 13, 1846.)

The competition ended in April 1846. A meeting on Wednesday, April 8, 1846, of the Select Council was reported as follows:

"...The report of the Joint Committee on the new City Hall, made to the Common Council on the 7th inst., and adopted by that body, 'recommending a building on the plan submitted by Mr. Singleton, with a front of eighty-four feet, to be finished (with the exception of the basement) in the manner indicated in that gentleman's communication,' on motion of John Tunis, Esq. was received and adopted by Select Council. The resolution of the Common Council, 'That the sum of one hundred dollars in conformity to the advertisement of the Committee, be paid to Mr. Singleton, and that as regards to other plans, the Council was under no regards to pay anything' - on motion of John Tunis, was so amended as to read, 'Resolved, that the sum of one hundred dollars be paid to Mr. Singleton, in conformity to advertisement of the Joint Committee, and that the further sum of twenty dollars, as recommended by said Joint Committee, be paid to each of the gentlemen who submitted plans and specifications on or before the day limited or set apart by the Committee for the reception of said plans and specifications.' Which amendment being unanimously adopted, the same was referred back to the Common Council for its concurrence or otherwise.

"The Resolution 'That some suitable person be appointed to superintend under the direction of the Building Committee, the erection of the new City Hall; that the materials and workmanship be in strict accordance with the contracts entered into; and that the persons so appointed shall receive \$2.50 per diem for his services' on motion of C. Hall, Esq., was concurred in and passed..." (The American Beacon, April 11, 1846.)

In the same week, the Building Committee placed the following advertisement in the local newspaper, The American Beacon of April 11, 1846:

"Separate sealed proposals will be received by the Building Committee, until 3 o'clock p.m. on Saturday the 9th day of May for furnishing the materials and doing the work of the

Stone masonry,  
Brick masonry,  
Carpentry,  
Painting, Glazing, and  
Plastering, for a new City Hall.

"Bids will specify the price per perch of 25 feet for the Stone Work, the price per thousand and (kilo count) of the Brick Work; the Bricks to be all hard. The plan of the building and specifications, can be seen at the Office of William R. Singleton Esq.. Bond and Security will be required for the faithful performance of each contract and ten percent of the amount of each payment withheld until the whole works completed, approved and received by the committee."

Jno G. H. Hatton,  
Chairman

In the meantime, the final selection of the site of the building was still unsettled. The public vote called for in February actually took place on April 23, 1846. The voters favored building a new City Hall on the Public Square, as opposed to the site of the old City Hall.

Three months later, on August 5, 1846 the Council resolved,

"that the Public Square, in obedience to the voice of the people be selected as a suitable site for the erection of a new City Hall.

"Resolved that a joint Committee of the Select and Common Council be appointed to advertise for proposals for the erection of a new City Hall according to plan heretofore adopted and that full power be given to said Committee to accept the most advantageous offer, and that the said Committee be authorized to take the necessary steps toward the early commencement and completion of the said building."

The cost of the building was not to exceed \$20,000. (Records of Common Council, Volume 6, p. 233). Money for the new building was raised by selling the Old Borough Courthouse on Main Street and by assessing each qualified voter one dollar. (From George Tucker, Norfolk Highlights, 1584-1881, Norfolk, Va.: Norfolk Historical Society, 1972, p. 72.)

Piles for the building were driven between May and July of 1847. On August 23, 1847 the cornerstone was laid with an impressive ceremony. Two accounts of the ceremony are quoted below.

"The parade that preceded the ceremony was pronounced by the newspapers to be the largest public procession in the history of the City. Lodge members in full regalia, military companies, naval officers, Norfolk area clergymen and other prominent citizens rode in carriages or walked in the parade to the music of several bands."

"The Masons conducted the cornerstone-laying ceremony, and the Reverend A. L. Hitzelberger, the pastor of Norfolk's St. Patrick's Catholic Church, delivered an address which was characterized by an elegance of style, combined with highly appropriate and classical allusions and patriotic sentiments." (from George Tucker, Norfolk Highlights, 1584-1881, Norfolk, Va.: Norfolk Historical Society, 1972, p. 72.)

The American Beacon of August 25, 1847, in describing the ceremony noted that at one point,

"...the various coins, records, etc. etc. were then deposited in the box, which was handed by the treasurer to the master, who placed it in the cavity formed for its reception and the stone was then let down in its place with solemn music. The Architect here presented the Square, Level, and the Plummets which were applied to the stone which was found to be correct."

W. S. Forrest made the following notation:

"Monday, 23rd. 'The cornerstone of the large and beautiful City Hall was laid this day. The volunteer companies, Freemasons, Odd-Fellows, Sons of Temperance, Rechabites, Druids, city authorities, officers of the Navy, the clergy, and the citizens generally, accompanied by a fine band of music, moved in procession through some of the streets and then assembled at the northeast corner of the foundation of the intended hall of justice.

"A box, containing coins, papers and other memorials, was placed in a square cavity, hewn out of a large piece of granite, upon which was placed another piece, and on this the thick and solid foundation - stones were laid, there to remain, perhaps, for ages, undisturbed, and concealed from the view of the busy crowds by which it will often be surrounded. An able Masonic address was delivered by Mr. J. C. McCabe, after which the Reverend A. L. Hitselberger, of St. Patrick's Church, who was selected as the orator for the occasion, delivered an address which was characterized by elegance of style, combined with highly appropriate and classical illusions and patriotic sentiments. 'It was, indeed,' says the Herald, 'one of the most masterly efforts of eloquence which we have ever listened to, and in which the gifted speaker exhibited extensive learning and familiarity with the history and jurisprudence of ancient times.' "(from W. S. Forrest, Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity. Philadelphia, Pa.: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1853, p. 235.)

On May 11, 1848 the Common Council resolved that "the Committee on the new City Hall be authorized to build a cistern in the basement thereof and on the motion of Mr. Taylor the said Committee were directed to carry up the wings on either side of the Portico from the brick course to the top of the pilaster cap with granite." (Records of Common Council, Volume 6, p. 391.) The building was completed in 1850. The Common Council first met in the building on April 24, 1850 (Common Council, Volume 7, p. 79). On May 29, 1850, the court of the City of Norfolk convened in the building for the first time (W. S. Forrest, p. 254).

## 2. Architect:

The architect credited with the design of the City Hall building was William R. Singleton. Mr. Singleton was said to have received and incorporated suggestions for building plan changes from Mr. Thomas U. Walter of Philadelphia, a member of the City Hall Building Committee.

Several contemporary newspaper references tie Mr. Singleton to the building plans.

At a meeting of the Select Council on Thursday, February 12, 1846, it was resolved that a committee for building a new City Hall be appointed to "invite by advertisement for one month, in the papers of the City, plans for said building; offering a premium of \$100 for the one that may be adopted..." (The American Beacon, February 16, 1846.) On April 8, 1846, the Select Council met and passed a resolution that "The report of the Joint Committee on the new City Hall, made to the Common Council on the 7th inst., and adopted by that body, 'recommending a building on the plan submitted by Mr. Singleton, with a front of eighty-four feet, to be finished (with the exception of the basement) in the manner indicated in that gentleman's communication...'". It was further decided that "the sum of one hundred dollars in conformity to the advertisement of the Committee, be paid to Mr. Singleton..." (The American Beacon, April 11, 1846.) In the same newspaper an advertisement was placed by the Building Committee to accept sealed proposals for the construction of the new City Hall. It noted that "The plan of the building, and specifications, can be seen at the office of William R. Singleton, Esq."

Other references linking Singleton to the design of the City Hall building appear in several local histories. W. S. Forrest in Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity, page 254, notes that "The original plan of the building was drawn by Mr. William R. Singleton, architect, formerly of Portsmouth and now of St. Louis, Missouri; some alterations were suggested by Mr. Walter of Philadelphia, which were adopted."

R. D. Whichard states that "The architect was William R. Singleton (formerly of Portsmouth) but it was indicated that he had considerable help from Thomas U. Walter, the famous Philadelphia architect who was well known in Norfolk." (Volume I, page 460.) Walter designed two other structures in Downtown Norfolk, the Freemason Street Baptist Church (1848-1850) and the Norfolk Academy (1840).

In Norfolk Highlights, page 71, it was said that "Singleton was one of the foremost American architects of his time. A native of Portsmouth, he was practicing in St. Louis, Missouri, at that time. His plans for the Norfolk County Courthouse in Portsmouth had made such a favorable impression that the Norfolk Council chose him."

Singleton apparently moved from St. Louis to the Tidewater area in 1846. In February and March of 1846, he placed the following advertisement in the local newspaper:

Wm. R. Singleton  
Architect, Civil Engineer and General Superintendent

"Having permanently located in the city of Norfolk, will attend to every branch connected with Architecture and Civil Engineering.

Designs, Plans, Sectional Drawings and General Specifications, will be furnished for every description of Buildings Constructions and Machinery. Particular attention will be given to the establishment of grades of streets and alleys, the draining of town lots, farms, etc.

A general superintendence will also be given to the erection of private residences, at a reasonable percentage.

OFFICE - At the head of Market Square, over the store of Messrs Haynes & Ghiselin.

Refer to Wm. H. Smith, Esq. or Col. Jno S. Millson."

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(taken from The American Beacon, February 5, 1846.)

Although Singleton has also been credited with the design of the Norfolk County Courthouse in Portsmouth, Virginia (1846), no further information on his life or career was located.

### 3. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:

From W. S. Forrest, Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity, 1853, p. 254:

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"The original plan of the building was drawn by Mr. William R. Singleton, architect, formerly of Portsmouth and now of St. Louis, Missouri; some alterations were suggested by Mr. Walter, of Philadelphia, which were adopted. General Superintendent of the work, Mr. Thomas Constable; Carpenter, Mr. Isaac M. Smith; Stone-Mason, Mr. O. H. Rand; Plasterers, Messers. Holmes and Tarral; Painter, Mr. John W. Belote; and Tin-Worker, Mr. G. L. Crow. Cost of the building, including the clerk's and register's offices, about \$50,000. The piles were driven by the machinery and workmen of Mr. N. Nash, Shipbuilder."

#### 4. Original plans and construction:

The following description was excerpted from W. S. Forrest, pages 254-256.

"The erection of this beautiful structure, is said to have been 'a triumph of mechanical skill.' Its walls rest upon solid rows of piles, of sufficient capacity, in the opinion of the most experienced architects, to 'sustain any weight of superstructure that could be raised upon them. In this particular, the most important of all, especial care was taken to secure a permanent and immovable foundation.'

"The length of the building is eighty feet (north and south) by sixty in width. The portico, fronting west, and seen from Bank Street, Granby Street, and the harbour, is supported by six massive columns of the Tuscan order; it is sixty feet long, leaving a recess of ten feet at each end. The cupola adds greatly to the beauty and the bold and commanding appearance of the building, being thirty-two feet in diameter, and fifty-two feet high. A passage, thirteen feet wide, extends through from the front to the rear entrance. On the north side of the passage is the court-room; and on the south, the mayor and sheriff's offices. On the second floor, and north side, is a spacious room, in which the United States' Court, for this district, is held. The council chambers and juryrooms are also on the second floor. The front wall is faced with granite, and the exterior of the others stuccoed in the most durable manner, and made to represent the same kind of stone. The entrance from the ground is by steps of granite, which extend nearly the entire length of the portico. The building also presents a handsome view on the eastern side, where there are, also, handsome stone steps to the entrance. The foundation walls are of granite, and rise from the piles eight feet to the surface of the ground, and thence of hewn stone five feet above. The walls are strengthened, to sustain the piers above, by reversed arches; and a cylindrical brick arch, of elaborate construction, supports the platform and pillars of the portico.

"Height of the main building, fifty-eight feet; entire height to the summit of the cupola (from which there is a fine view of the harbour and surrounding scenery) one hundred and ten feet, above which is erected a tall flag-staff, from which, in public occasions, a very large ensign, with the stars and stripes, is unfurled to the breeze. Attached to the lightning rod, a few feet above the top of the staff, is a gilt vane, five feet long, in the shape of an arrow.

"Beneath the principal passage, on the first floor, there is a large cistern, holding about forty-five thousand gallons. The roof is covered with tin....



"The situation affords an excellent view of the structure from several different points. It is on a line with that portion of Main Street, east of Church, from which the cupola is plainly seen. The view, from the harbour, on the west, and approaching the city, is full, and really imposing. It is seen, also, for a considerable distance, on the Seaboard and Roanoke Railroad.

"The first eight miles of the road (to Bower's Hill) is perfectly straight; and riding on an open platform, the traveller has the benefit of an interesting perspective view of it as it recedes in the long vista of forest trees on each side; and it is quite remarkable, that the dome of the City Hall in Norfolk stands precisely in the centre of the vanishing point of vision, and continues in full view for the four miles, when the projection, of the trees gradually shut it in. The City Hall was located without a thought of its relation to the railroad; and its position presenting it as a prominent land-mark and object of vision through a vista of many miles of the latter, is really a curious coincidence."

From Wertenbaker and Schlegel. Norfolk: Historic Southern Port. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1962, p. 132.

"This building, which still stands, imposing and beautiful amid the business structures of the modern city, faced west, overlooking Back Creek and the harbor beyond. It is eighty feet by sixty with a portico, supported by six Tuscan columns. A cupola, thirty-two feet in diameter, and rising one hundred and ten feet above the street, dominates the structure, and in former days made a conspicuous object for miles around. Granite steps lead to the portico, and the front wall is faced with granite. The building contained court rooms, mayor's office, sheriff's office, council chambers, and jury room, while beneath the first floor was a cistern, with a capacity of forty-five thousand gallons. The entire cost was about \$50,000."

#### 5. Alterations and additions:

A new roof was placed on the structure in 1857 after the original roof was blown off in a snowstorm. H. W. Burton in History of Norfolk, Virginia, 1877, made the following notation:

"January 17, 1857... a terrible snow-storm began and continued incessantly for two days.... During the severe storm on the 18th instant... the tin roofs of the City Hall and Odd Fellows Hall were ripped from their places and blown into the streets." (pp. 27-28).

Major alterations to the building occurred in the early 1960's when it was converted from a courthouse to a tomb and museum for General Douglas MacArthur.

The following is excerpted from the Virginia Record June 1964. "MacArthur Memorial completed by E. T. Gresham Co., Inc.":

"...the work was completed in 1963 after 22 months of work...the old interior was completely torn out...except in the dome and roof structure, all of the old wooden beams and supports were supplanted with steel...entire building was fireproofed.

"...all interior walls and floors removed...nine galleries, a foyer, reception room, exhibition room and rotunda with crypts for General MacArthur and his wife were constructed within the two-story memorial...

"...Italian travertine marble was used to case the walls of the rotunda, which was floored with rose travertine. Around the walls of the rotunda were placed marble plaques in which were inscribed excerpts from some of the General's speeches. All tile and flooring work including marble finishing was by Ferrell Linoleum and Tile Company, Inc.

"...The bronze wreaths on the crypts were also of Italian origin, done by Bruno Bearzi...

"...for doors and panelling a dark Phillipine wood...called golden narra... was used.

"...A lighting system in the ceiling of the dome was especially designed and constructed by Lewis Smith and Company in New York City...

"... Consulting engineer on the project was the firm of Thayer and Wallace of Norfolk, and Vansant and Gûsler of Norfolk acted as mechanical engineers. The latter firm was responsible for the design of the entire heating and cooling system...

"...entire cost of \$517,000..."

For the 1960 alterations, William and Geoffrey Platt of New York City designed the new interior. Finlay Ferguson, Jr. of Norfolk acted as architectural coordinator. E. T. Gresham and Company served as the general contractor.

#### HISTORICAL CONTEXT (PART B)

As early as 1803, when the courthouse on East Main Street had been in use less than twenty years, the Council resolved on August 20, 1803 that the land on which the courthouse and jail stood was inconvenient for that purpose and directed its President to give notice agreeable to law that an application would be made to the next General Assembly for its sale. The inconvenience and the unbecoming aspects of the Courthouse at this location were felt by many citizens and visitors of Norfolk, as indicated in their writings, but the events of the years that followed, such as the War of 1812, postponed any serious consideration of such a move for more than a generation.

Plans to develop a more suitable site for a new courthouse were revived in the 1830's. A letter to the Richmond Compiler and printed locally in The American Beacon on Tuesday, January 7, 1834 served to stimulate discussion on the subject. The most pertinent part of the letter was as follows:

"...I am glad however to hear that a project is actually on foot at the present moment to convert the ugly and noisome (sic) marsh above the upper Bridge...into a beautiful Fancy Ground, or promenade, for the use of all citizens, to be railed around with iron and planted with trees, comme il faut. At the same time, also, I learned that a spot is to be reserved at the head of the enclosure, for a new City

Hall which may be built hereafter, and looking down the river to the Naval Hospital...it will form a new and striking ornament of the scene as you approach the town. The plan is excellent and I cannot help hoping that I may live to see it carried into execution, and perhaps take a turn in the gravel walk with some fair damsel of the place."

An Act of Assembly passed February 27, 1833 authorized the Hustings Court of the Borough of Norfolk to have "the course of Cove Street altered and the Back Creek above Bank Street filled up at public expense, appropriated to the Borough of Norfolk, to be enclosed and established as a Public Square, for the use of all the citizens under such regulations as Council shall from time to time ordain and provide." (Source: files in the Norfolk Department of Public Works, Bureau of Surveys.)

The plan for a "Fancy Ground" took on an official shape locally at the Council meeting on November 25, 1834, when an ordinance to provide for filling up Back Creek above Bank Street bridge, was read a first, second and third time and passed. In part the ordinance read:

"1. Be it ordained by the Common Council, that William Maxwell, Benjamin Pollard, Thomas G. Broughton, Robert Soutter, and John N. Tazewell, be and they are hereby appointed a Committee to agree and contract with any person or persons, for filling up the said Back Creek above Bank Street Bridge, in some solid and substantial manner, and for enclosing the said Public Square with an iron railing, and planting it with trees in a suitable style..."

"3. And be it further ordained, that the said Committee shall be and are hereby authorised (sic) to draw upon the Register for any sum or sums of money which may be wanting for the purpose hereinbefore indicated, not exceeding five thousand dollars..."

The filling in of Back Creek and the creation of a Public Square was an important civic undertaking. Wertenbaker and Schlegel described the task as follows:

"An unattractive feature of early Norfolk was the marshy ground along the shores of Back Creek, between the old town and the new residential district centering around Freemason and Granby Streets. At high tide the water came up to the present intersection of Metcalf and Plume at one point, to Market and Court at another, and actually touched Freemason just west of Granby. 'The Creek is a foul blotch on our fair town,' said a writer in the Herald in June, 1827. 'Whenever the tide ebbs, it is left dry and covered at the edges with slime. It can be seen clearly from the thoroughfare where Bank Street joins Catherine. Why not shut out the water at the Granby Street bridge? This would permit the mud to harden, and trees and grass to grow.' This suggestion aroused great interest. All were agreed that the marsh should be eliminated, but some thought it wise to leave a canal to connect with Cove Street, others preferred a public square, still others a promenade with shade trees. The final vote was in favor of the public square, with a space at one end reserved for a new City Hall. It was not until 1839 however, that the work of filling in was actually accomplished, and then only for the area east of Bank and Catherine Streets." (pages 131-132).

The filling in of the site, as noted, was completed in 1839. An article in the Norfolk and Portsmouth Herald of November 8, 1839, reported that "the Committee on the Public Square intended to avail themselves of the present season to set out the Square with ornamental trees, of which they desire about 200 of various descriptions." A classified advertisement in the same newspaper read as follows:

"Trees

Wanted for the Public Square, 200 trees about 15 to 20 feet high. 50 Forest Maples, 25 Weeping Willows, 25 or 50 China trees, 50 Swamps or Forrest Elms and 50 Locust. The above are wanted on or before the 15th of this month, November. Apply to Christopher Hall, J. Cornick, C. Bonsal, Committee of the Public Square."

In 1840, the water was dammed out from the space between Granby Street and Bank Street and a more pleasant vista was created from the Public Square westwardly down to the Elizabeth River. (Source: files of the Norfolk Department of Public Works, Bureau of Surveys.)

After Back Creek was filled and the Public Square provided, serious consideration was given to the building of a new City Hall. (The actions leading up to the erection and dedication of the new City Hall are described above in the section on "Date of Erection.")

An Act of Assembly passed January 18, 1847 provided that:

"...the select and common councils of the City of Norfolk shall be, and they are hereby authorized to erect a City Hall on the said public square to be used as a courthouse for the said city, and for such other public purposes as the lawfully constituted and proper authorities thereof may prescribe and direct, and also to open a street running through the southern boundary of said public square from Bank Street to Addington Lane..."

W. S. Forrest described the filling in of Back Creek and the subsequent improvement in appearance that the Public Square and new City Hall provided:

"This year [1839] the cove, which extended east from Bank Street nearly to the southern terminus of Cumberland Street, was filled up, enclosed, ornamented with shade trees, and denominated the 'Public Square'.

"This cove was, for many years, an eyesore to the inhabitants, and was justly deemed a public nuisance. The malaria that rose therefrom, on a hot summer's day, at low tide, was not at all pleasant. View the spot now [1853]. That noble structure, standing upon its firm foundation, in the centre of the lot which rises gradually from Bank, Williams, Cove and Avon Streets, until it reaches an elevation of several feet above the level of those streets, and immediately over what was formerly the middle of the cove. The green turf, paved walks, substantial and ornamental railing, etc. all tend to form a very striking contrast to the unsightly bog of former days and present an excellent example of the improving taste of the 'city fathers'. (pages 211-212)

Several important local events occurred at the City Hall building between 1860 and 1880. Stephen Douglas made a speech from the City Hall steps in 1860. In 1862, Mayor William Lamb surrendered Norfolk to the Union Army.

During 1867 and 1868 a number of public meetings on the new Virginia Constitution took place there. Each event is described below.

Wertenbaker and Schlegel described the visit of Douglas as follows:

"On August 25 (1860) Douglas paid Norfolk a visit. He was received with great respect, a committee meeting him at the wharf in Portsmouth, to conduct him across the river to his rooms at the National Hotel. In the evening, when he spoke from the portico of the City Hall, five thousand people, not only from Norfolk and Portsmouth, but from Old Point, Hampton, and the country for miles around, packed every corner of the Public Square. Douglas pleaded earnestly for squatter sovereignty, trying as usual to reconcile this, his favorite doctrine, with the Dred Scott decision. The crowd listened attentively but without enthusiasm." (page 201)

Wertenbaker and Schlegel, page 217, also described the surrender of Norfolk in 1862 to the Union forces.

"Early in the morning on May 10, General John E. Wool, accompanied by President Lincoln, Secretary Stanton and Secretary Chase, landed a large body of troops at Ocean View, and marched on Norfolk...at four in the afternoon they reached the Confederate earthworks, but finding them deserted and the guns spiked, they continued until they were within sight of the spires of Norfolk peering through the trees. Here they were halted by Mayor Lamb and several councilmen, with a flag of truce. The Mayor stated that the Confederates had evacuated Norfolk, that there would be no opposition, and requested protection for citizens and property. Thereupon the men bivouacked on a field, while General Wool, Secretary Chase and General Viele, with an escort, entered the town and proceeded to the City Hall. Here the Mayor addressed a crowd of citizens. He regretted the abandonment of the City, and, had the decision rested with him, would have defended it to the last. But since these steps has been taken, he begged them to acquiesce and abstain from violence and disorder. A call for three cheers for President Davis received an enthusiastic response, and after giving three groans for Lincoln 'with less heartiness', the people dispersed."

Wertenbaker and Schlegel also described a series of speeches and rallies which took place at the City Hall Building in the late 1860's. These concerned the drafting and passage of the new Virginia Constitution. Black radicals, white conservatives and political coalition groups all had a part to play (pages 238-241).

Public improvements to the area surrounding the City Hall were made after the Civil War. In particular the rest of Back Creek was filled in and City Hall Avenue was built. Wertenbaker and Schlegel provided the following description of these improvements:

"No feature of the new drainage system was more welcome than the elimination of the last remnants of Back Creek, between Bank and Granby Streets. For some years after the Civil War the imposing City Hall looked out to the west over what the Journal called a 'great pestiferous, noisome, (sic) odorous, odious, and unsightly marsh' (1871). On the east the marsh extended from Plume Street almost up to Freemason, but further west it was so narrow that Granby Street crossed it

on an old stone bridge. It had been suggested repeatedly that this area should be filled in to enlarge City Hall Square. Not only would this remove a menace to health, but it would fill the long-felt need of a park...Finally in 1881, an enterprising citizen, A. A. McCullough, 'took hold of the matter on his own responsibility and account, and transformed the old cesspool into a busy mart of real healthy business life.'

"In 1884 the canal was replaced by a four foot underground iron culvert, the space filled in with shells, and a wide boulevard constructed from the City Hall to Granby...few indeed realized that the site was once occupied by a creek deep enough for navigation, that where now stand tall office buildings, busy slaves once loaded or unloaded produce at their masters' wharves." (pages 251-252)

In 1917, the City voted to inaugurate a Council-Manager form of government, effective September 1, 1918. On September 2, 1918, the newly elected Council, composed of five members, met for the first time for purposes other than electing a City Manager, in the Council Chamber of the City Hall. Afterwards they adjourned to the Room of the Circuit Court. This was the last meeting of Council in the City Hall, for it was during this session that a new place of meeting was designated. The record of this meeting closes as follows: "The Council then adjourned, to meet in the Assembly Room, City Market Building, on Tuesday, September 10, 1918, as per ordinance adopted this day." This ordinance was changed to a resolution at the next meeting. (Source: files in the Department of City Planning.)

The old City Hall building continued to function solely as a courthouse until 1960.

"In 1960 General Douglas MacArthur agreed to house his papers and memorabilia in Norfolk, and the City offered the soon to be vacated courthouse for the purpose. Douglas MacArthur was born in Little Rock, Arkansas on January 26, 1880, the son of Arthur MacArthur (1845-1912), a lieutenant in the U. S. Army and Mary Pickney Hardy of Norfolk (a memorial to MacArthur's mother was erected on the site of the Hardy family home, "Riveredge" in the Berkley section of Norfolk in 1953 - thus MacArthur always felt close to Norfolk and felt it appropriate for his final resting place). MacArthur was Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in the Pacific and on December 19, 1944 he became a General of the Army. He later became a Commander of U. N. Forces in Korea, from which position he was dismissed by President Truman in 1951 for disobedience.

"...The memorial opened informally in January, 1964 and was to have been officially dedicated by MacArthur in May, 1964, but he died on April 5, 1964. His body lay in state in the rotunda of the memorial on Friday, April 10; the funeral service was held on Saturday, April 11, at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and the body interred under the dome of the rotunda in the memorial (National Register Application, 1971)."

## PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. DESCRIPTION OF EXTERIOR:

This building has been described as one of Virginia's best remaining examples of Classical Revival architecture. It is eighty feet long (north and south),

sixty feet wide, and rests on a granite foundation. The dominant features are a giant-order portico and a fifty-two foot high ribbed dome.

A flight of granite steps leads to the main entrance. The portico, facing west, consists of six, two-story high columns of the Tuscan order supporting a plain triangular pediment. The words "The MacArthur Memorial" appear in the plain entablature. Recessed ten feet behind the columns, the facade is seven bays wide with a central, double-door entry. The doors are enframed with engaged pilasters supporting a dentil cornice. The tall, first floor windows feature 12/12 lights, while on the second story, the windows are shorter with 8/8 lights. Engaged, two-story pilasters separate the bays. Recessed panels appear in the spandrels.

The cylindrical dome which crowns the building is fifty-two feet high with a thirty-two foot diameter. Rising from a square base, engaged columns support a ribbed dome. Small windows with vents (altered from the original) are recessed between the columns. A flagpole rises from the slightly flattened apex of the dome.

Stucco made to resemble granite covers the exterior walls on the east, north and south sides. Each elevation features engaged pilasters supporting a plain entablature and triangular pediment. The window treatment is identical to that of the main facade.

#### B. DESCRIPTION OF INTERIOR:

In 1961 the entire interior was gutted to convert it into museum space and tomb for General Douglas MacArthur. The original foundation now supports only the outside walls and superstructure, while a new steel foundation and piles support the new interior. The central feature is the two-story open rotunda about 40 feet in diameter and 37 feet high within the existing dome; the tombs of the general and his wife are beneath the dome. The floor is of Italian rose tavernelle marble, while the marble trim elsewhere is Italian red antique marble. The circular Italian marble walls of the rotunda are executed in Roman travertine and the five large panels in which are inscribed the general's achievements and excerpts from his speeches are done in Botticino marble. The wood paneling and doors are Philippine narra. The walls in six of the display rooms are covered by 7 X 14 foot murals painted on canvas by Alton S. Tobey under a \$30,000 grant from the Abbey Fund of the National Academy of Design in New York; the murals depict scenes from MacArthur's life. The other walls are covered by beige monk's cloth. The L-shaped building housing courtrooms was renovated to provide more space for the MacArthur exhibits (1964-65). Work on the memorial was begun in March, 1962, and completed late in 1963. (Source: National Register Application, 1971)

#### C. SITE:

The site of the old City Hall is bounded by Court, Plume and Bank Streets, and City Hall Avenue. The main building faces west. Three other one-story buildings, containing the MacArthur archives, an orientation center, and a gift shop also stand on the site.

In 1970, a bronze statue of MacArthur was erected in front of the main building. It was executed by sculptor Walter Hancock of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and is a duplicate of Hancock's statue for the Military Academy at West Point. The statue, which weighs 900 lbs., portrays MacArthur in his uniform of the 1942-45 period.

The entire site is landscaped with a variety of mature trees, including honey locusts, live oaks, magnolias and crape myrtles. Flower planters, brick and cobblestone walkways and benches are also used. A black, metal fence, a reproduction of the original "Public Square" fence, surrounds the entire site.

A map of the entire site plan is included in the photographic entry.

### PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### A. ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS:

The location of the original plans for this building is unknown.

A set of blueprints for the 1960 renovation of the building is available at the Office of the Building Inspector, City of Norfolk. The drawings are dated November 17, 1961 and signed by William and Geoffrey Platt, and Finlay F. Ferguson, Jr.

#### B. EARLY VIEWS:

1. Photograph taken about 1896. Available at Sargeant Memorial Room, Kirn Library, Norfolk.
2. Map of 1851 with insets showing the Portsmouth and Norfolk Court-houses, both designed by William R. Singleton. Photograph of map found in Carroll Walker's Norfolk: A Pictorial History. Virginia Beach, Virginia: Donning, 1975, page 30.
3. Photograph taken about 1892. Published in Walker, Carroll. Norfolk: A Pictorial History. Virginia Beach, Virginia: Donning, 1975, page 66.
4. Photograph showing building decorated with flags and lighted to celebrate visit of President Taft in 1909. Published in Walker, Carroll. Norfolk: A Pictorial History. Virginia Beach, Virginia: Donning, 1975, page 124.
5. Photograph showing building at time of 1920 flood. From the Murchaugh collection. Available at Sargeant Memorial Room, Kirn Library, Norfolk.
6. Photograph showing building in background taken about 1931. Available at Sargeant Memorial Room, Kirn Library, Norfolk.
7. Photograph taken about 1902. Published in Stewart, William H. History of Norfolk County, Virginia. Chicago, Illinois: Biographical Publishing Company, 1902, page 184.
8. Photograph taken about 1930, showing building in background with trolley cars in foreground. Available at Sargeant Memorial Room, Kirn Library, Norfolk.
9. Photograph taken in 1936 showing building in background, parade in foreground. Available at Sargeant Memorial Room, Kirn Library, Norfolk.



## C. BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Primary Sources:

- a) Records of Common Council, Volumes 6 and 7. Available at Sargeant Memorial Room, Kirn Library, Norfolk.

2. Secondary Sources:

- a) The American Beacon, February 16, 1846, p. 2.
- b) The American Beacon, February 13, 1846.
- c) The American Beacon, March 13, 1846.
- d) The American Beacon, April 11, 1846.
- e) Tucker, George. Norfolk Highlights, 1584-1881. Norfolk, Virginia: Norfolk Historical Society, 1972.
- f) The American Beacon, August 25, 1847.
- g) Forrest, William S. Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity. Philadelphia, Pa.: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1853.
- h) Wertenbaker, Thomas and Schlegel, Marvin. Norfolk: Historic Southern Port. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1962, Second edition.
- i) Burton, H. W. History of Norfolk, Virginia. Norfolk, Va: Norfolk Virginian Job Print, 1877.
- j) Virginia Record, June 1964.
- k) The American Beacon, January 7, 1834.
- l) Files in the Department of City Planning, Norfolk, Virginia.
- m) Files in the Department of Public Works, Bureau of Surveys, Norfolk, Virginia.
- n) Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, "National Register Application", 1971.
- o) O'Neal, William B. Architecture in Virginia: An Official Guide to Four Centuries of Building in the Old Dominion. New York, N.Y.: Walker and Company, Inc., 1968.
- p) Whichard, Rogers Dey. The History of Lower Tidewater Virginia. Volume 1. New York, N.Y.: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1959.
- q) The American Beacon, February 5, 1846, p. 3.

## D. LIKELY SOURCES NOT YET INVESTIGATED:

E. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL:

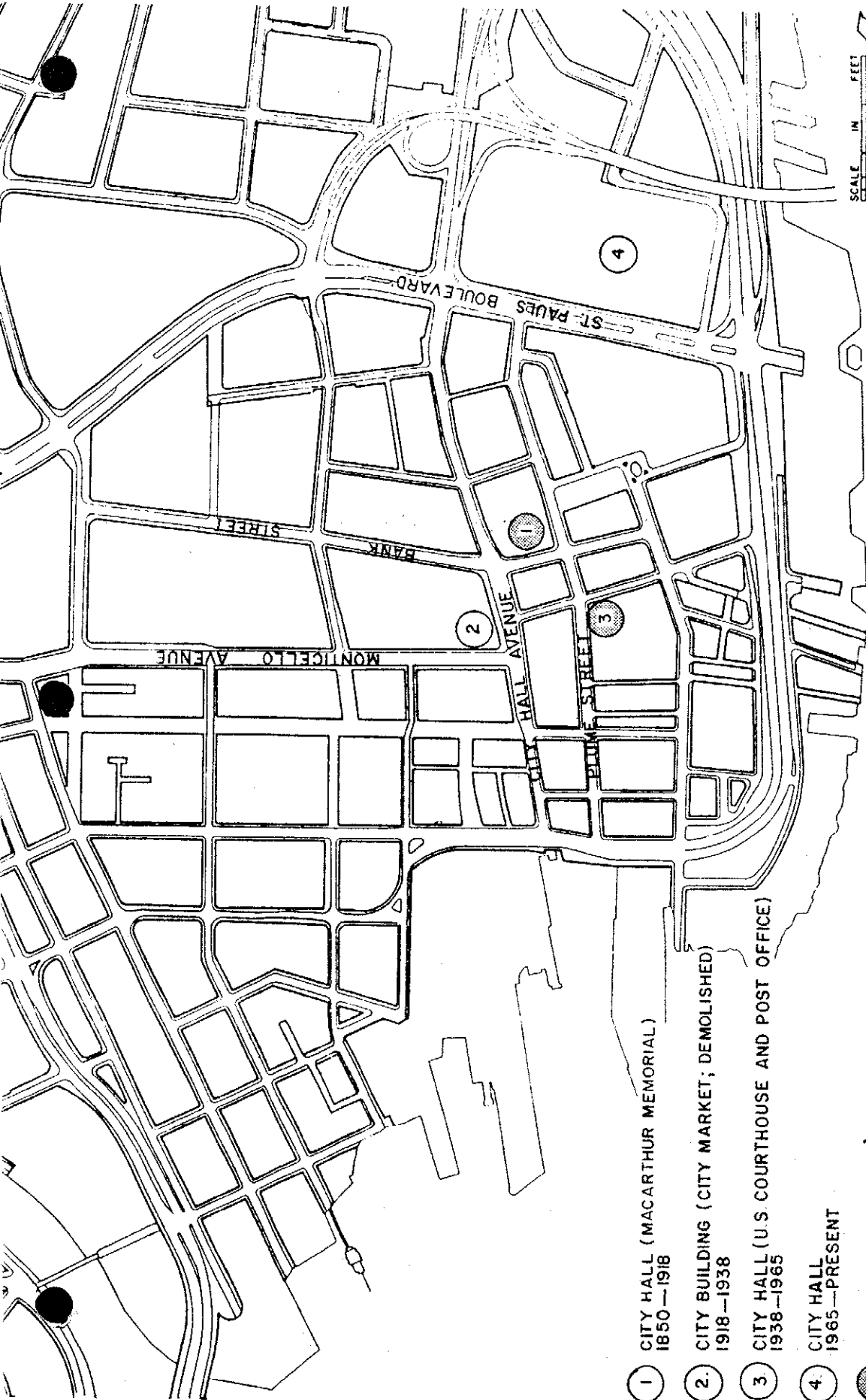
Map showing locations of Norfolk City Halls: 1850 - present.

Prepared by: James Gehman, President, Tidewater Chapter, American Institute of Architects.

Ralph W. Miner, Jr., Assistant Director, Norfolk Department of City Planning.

Lynda Stanley, City Planner, Norfolk Department of City Planning.

Photographs for submittal by Charles Ansell, Architect.



- 1 CITY HALL (MACARTHUR MEMORIAL)  
1850 — 1918
- 2 CITY BUILDING (CITY MARKET; DEMOLISHED)  
1918 — 1938
- 3 CITY HALL (U.S. COURTHOUSE AND POST OFFICE)  
1938 — 1965
- 4 CITY HALL  
1965 — PRESENT
- INCLUDED IN AMERICA'S CITY HALLS PROJECT  
SPONSORED BY AIA, USCM, AND DOI

SCALE IN FEET  
0 200 400 600  
DOWNTOWN NORFOLK



Photograph by Department of City Planning, 1981.

NORFOLK CITY HALL 1850

*Table  
1850  
General  
Memorial*

INFORMATION ON THE BUILDING WHICH SERVED AS NORFOLK'S  
CITY HALL 1850-1918 (NOW GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR  
MEMORIAL)

SUBMITTED TO AMERICA'S CITY HALLS, A JOINT PROGRAM  
OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, THE UNITED  
STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS, AND THE UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

PREPARED BY THE CITY OF NORFOLK AND THE TIDEWATER  
VIRGINIA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF  
ARCHITECTS

SEPTEMBER 1981

#ABS NO: VA-32 (p. 2)

ISSUED-1961	ISSUED-1962
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**WEST AND SOUTH  
ELEVATIONS -**

**W-6**

**BUILDING MATERIALS  
ANALYSIS REPORT**

**REPORT NUMBER  
BY UNIT ASSOCIATE**



**CONTRACTOR MUST  
VERIFY ALL  
DIMENSIONS AT THE  
BUILDING**

FINLAY I. HENDERSON, JR.,  
ASSOCIATES, INC.  
370 SOUTH AVE., NORFOLK, VA.



— SOUTH SIDE ELEVATION —  
Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"

DATE 8/21/68  
POLYTECH (WEST) MOBILE

**REVISIONS-**

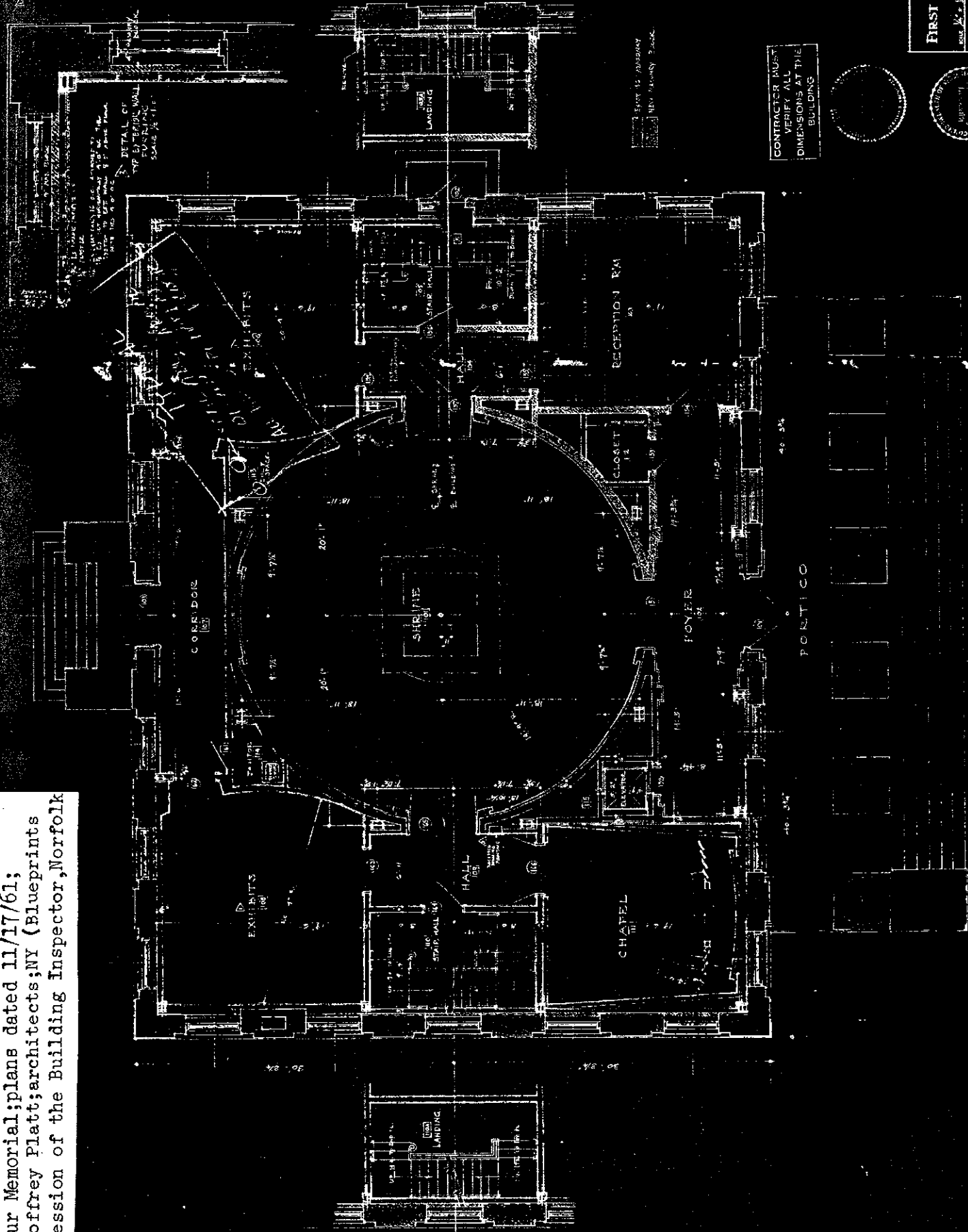
ISSUED-1961					
VOLUME 8	1960				
PAGE NO.	2	10			
DATE	1	1960			
NO.			71		

[illegible]

# FIRST FLOOR PLAN

[illegible]

FINLAY F. FERGUSON, JI  
ASSOCIATED ARCHITECT  
2210 COLLEY AVE, HOBOKEN, N.J.



CONTRACTOR MUST  
VERIFY ALL  
DIMENSIONS AT THE  
BUILDING

DETAIL AT  
WILSON REYNOLDS  
#501 400 1293  
CROSSMOUNT, N.C.

153 UEB-1941

ISSUED-1962

CONTRACTOR MUST  
VERIFY ALL  
DIMENSIONS AT THE  
BUILDING

## SECOND FLOOR PLAN

our  $\frac{1}{4} \times 10$  COL. 141.

MARTIN KEMMEL  
 15001 E. 133RD  
 N. W. 4E

FRANK J. FERGUSON, JR.  
ASSOCIATED ARCHITECTS



6700 JALAN  
TITAN

## CASE SECTION

(2) The following shall apply:

Memorandum

9-14

WILHELM PLATT ARCHITECT LOFFREY PLATT ASSOCIATE	DATE May 17, 1966
--	----------------------

CONTRACTOR MUST  
VERIFY ALL  
DIMENSIONS AT THE  
BUILDING

FRANKLIN & TEMPLETON  
FUND MANAGEMENT COMPANY  
2300 CALVERT AVE. - BALTIMORE  
2120 COLLEGE AVE. - PHOENIX

DLA1.5A-A  
SHOWING TOP VIEW OF  
20 X LIGHTING UNIT  
& MOUNTING LUGS  
(SEE ALSO SHEET D-4)

SHOW THE TWO VIOLETS  
TO THE EIGHTH PAGE  
& BACK TO THE  
(SEE ALSO MEET P. 4)

See also 54827 P.4)